

Message Text

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ACTION EB-07

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CAB-02 CIAE-00 COME-00 DODE-00
DOTE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 CIEP-01 FAA-00 OES-06 EPA-01
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O R 131518Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7922
INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON
FAA BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 36747

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR, FR, UK, US
SUBJECT: FRENCH DEMARCHE ON CONCORDE

REF: PARIS 36305, STATE 299934

1. I WAS CALLED IN EARLY EVENING DEC. 10 BY FOREIGN
MINISTER DE GUIRINGAUD ON SUBJECT OF CONCORDE AND SPENT
A LITTLE OVER HALF AN HOUR IN DISCUSSION WITH HIM. I
LEARNED THAT HIS DEMARCHE HAS BEEN PROMPTED BY THE
DEPT. WHICH HAD APPARENTLY EXPRESSED SOME SURPRISE
RECENTLY TO THE FRENCH EMBASSY IN WASHINGTON THAT
NEITHER THE FRENCH NOR THE BRITISH HAD FORMALLY RAISED
THE CONCORDE ISSUE WITH US IN SOME TIME. DE GUIRINGAUD
HANDED ME AIDE-MEMOIRE (SEPTTEL) OUTLINING FRENCH
POSITION ON CONCORDE ACCESS TO NEW YORK.

2. DE GUIRINGAUD SAID GOF HAD CONSIDERED IT PRUDENT
NOT TO RAISE CONCORDE ISSUE WITH US DURING ELECTORAL
CAMPAIGN, BUT NOW THAT ELECTION WAS OVER GOF FELT
COMPELLED CONVEY TO US ITS SERIOUS CONCERN OVER
CONCORDE DEVELOPMENTS. NEW YORK PORT AUTHORITY WAS
DELAYING ITS DECISION UNTIL FEBRUARY AND LAWSUIT FILED
BY AIR FRANCE AND BRITISH AIRWAYS WAS STILL PENDING IN
THE NEW YORK COURTS, WITH RESULT THAT BOTH DECISIONS
MIGHT BE HANDED DOWN AT ABOUT THE SAME TIME.

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3. DE GUIRINGAUD WONDERED WHETHER USG YET FULLY

APPRECIATED HOW SENSITIVE AN ISSUE CONCORDE WAS IN RELATIONS BETWEEN OUR TWO COUNTRIES. CONCORDE WAS NOT ONLY A PROJECT OF TECHNOLOGICAL AND COMMERCIAL IMPORTANCE TO FRANCE AND THE UK, BUT IT WAS A SYMBOL OF THE CAPACITY OF FRENCH AND BRITISH INDUSTRY AND BOTH COUNTRIES HAD MARSHALLED CONSIDERABLE RESOURCES BEHIND THE PROJECT. IF CONCORDE WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO LAND AT NEW YORK, THEN THE WHOLE PROGRAM WOULD BE "DESTROYED." THIS WOULD HAVE VERY DAMAGING EFFECT ON FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION AND ITS ATTITUDE TOWARD THE US. FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION WOULD FAIL TO APPRECIATE THE DISTINCTION BETWEEN FEDERAL AND LOCAL JURISDICTION IN THE US AND WOULD CONCLUDE THAT CONCORDE LANDINGS HAD BEEN REFUSED SIMPLY BECAUSE THE US WANTED TO "KILL" THE CONCORDE PROGRAM. THOUSANDS OF WORKERS IN THE FRENCH AERONAUTICAL INDUSTRY WOULD BE AFFECTED. REACTION WOULD BE ESPECIALLY BITTER IN THE TOULOUSE AREA, AND THIS WAS OF SPECIAL CONCERN TO THE GOF, SAID DE GUIRINGAUD, BECAUSE TOULOUSE "IS ALREADY NOT VERY SOLIDLY COMMITTED TO THE PRESIDENTIAL MAJORITY."

4. IF CONCORDE IS REFUSED ACCESS TO NEW YORK, RESENTMENT OF FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION WOULD INEVITABLY LEAD TO ANTI-AMERICAN DEMONSTRATIONS IN FRANCE. GOF IS "TERRIFIED" AT THIS PROSPECT, SAID DE GUIRINGAUD, "BECAUSE IF THIS HAPPENS IT WOULD SIMPLY BE IMPOSSIBLE FOR THE GOF TO PLEAD THE US CASE BEFORE FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION." USG SHOULD NOT INTERPRET GOF'S FAILURE TO HAVE RAISED CONCORDE ISSUE WITH US AT DIPLOMATIC LEVEL DURING ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN TO SIGNIFY ANY LESSENING OF INTEREST, AND GOF WAS THEREFORE FORCEFULLY DRAWING USG'S ATTENTION TO THE ISSUE AGAIN AT THIS TIME.

5. I ACCEPTED THE AIDE-MEMOIRE AND DID NOT VENTURE ANY COMMENT ON THE TEXT. IN RESPONSE TO DE GUIRINGAUD'S REMARKS I SAID THAT THE USG WAS FULLY AWARE HOW IMPORTANT CONCORDE WAS TO OUR BILATERAL RELATIONS AND HOW HARMFUL A NEGATIVE DECISION FOR NEW YORK WOULD BE TO THOSE RELATIONS. I REMINDED HIM, HOWEVER, THAT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT HAD THUS FAR DONE EVERYTHING IT COULD

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TO ENSURE THAT CONCORDE BE GIVEN A FAIR CHANCE. SECRETARY COLEMAN HAD ISSUED AN EXCELLENT DECISION, WHICH HAD BEEN UPHELD BY THE COURTS AND WHICH HAD BEEN INSTRUMENTAL IN HEADING OFF A CONGRESSIONAL BAN ON CONCORDE. BECAUSE OF THE SEPARATION OF POWERS UNDER OUR CONSTITUTION, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SIMPLY DOES NOT HAVE THE POWER TO DICTATE TO THE PORT AUTHORITY. SECRETARY KISSINGER AND OTHERS IN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

HAD BEEN IN TOUCH ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS WITH THE NEW

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 36747

YORK AUTHORITIES TO STRESS THE IMPORTANT FOREIGN POLICY IMPLICATIONS HINGING ON THE NEW YORK DECISION. BUT THE NEW YORK AUTHORITIES WERE CONSCIOUS OF THEIR OWN PREROGATIVES, AND I UNDERSTOOD THAT THE PORT AUTHORITY NOW EXPECTED TO RENDER ITS DECISION ONLY IN MID-FEBRUARY.

6. OUR SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT ALSO PERMITTED THE FRENCH AND THE BRITISH TO SEEK REMEDY THROUGH THE COURTS, WHICH THEY HAD DONE WITH THE CARRIERS' SUITS ARGUING THAT TREATY RIGHTS SHOULD PREVAIL AND THAT NEW YORK COULD NOT PRE-EMPT THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSIBILITY TO REGULATE FOREIGN COMMERCE INCLUDING AIR TRANSPORT. ANY COURT DECISION COULD ALSO BE SUBJECT TO APPEAL. HERE AGAIN THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT COULD NOT DICTATE TO THE COURTS.

7. I FURTHER NOTED THAT THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION WOULD NO LONGER BE IN OFFICE IN FEBRUARY WHEN THE PORT AUTHORITY HANDED DOWN ITS DECISION. I DOUBTED PERSONALLY WHETHER THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE DISPOSED LIGHTLY TO CONSIDER SETTING ASIDE THE COLEMAN DECISION,

ESPECIALLY SINCE I RECALLED THAT IN HIS INTERVIEW WITH
L'EXPRESS LAST AUGUST PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER HAD
SUPPORTED CONTINUATION OF THE SIXTEEN MONTH TRIAL
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PERIOD. WHAT MR. CARTER HAD OBJECTED TO WAS SUPERSONIC
FLIGHT OVER THE CONTINENTAL US IN VIEW OF OUR OWN
DECISION SEVERAL YEARS AGO NOT TO PURSUE SST DEVELOP-
MENT. UNFORTUNATELY MR. CARTER'S VIEWS AS CONVEYED TO
L'EXPRESS WOULD SINCE APPEAR TO HAVE BEEN SOMEWHAT
DISTORTED IN FRANCE. DE GUIRINGAUD SAID HE WAS GLAD TO
HEAR THIS FOR HE WAS HIMSELF NOT TOO FAMILIAR WITH THE
L'EXPRESS INTERVIEW. FRANCE WAS NOT INTERESTED IN
SUPERSONIC OVERFLIGHT OF CONTINENTAL US ANYWAY, HE SAID.

8. I ALSO INFORMED DE GUIRINGAUD THAT HE COULD REST
ASSURED THAT THE NEW ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE WELL
BRIEFED ON THE CONCORDE ISSUE AND ALL ITS IMPLICATIONS.
PRESIDENT-ELECT CARTER WAS CONSCIOUS OF THE NEED TO
STRENGTHEN TIES WITH OUR EUROPEAN ALLIES AND I WAS
CONFIDENT HIS ADMINISTRATION WOULD WEIGH CAREFULLY THE
IMPACT THAT THE CONCORDE HAS ON US RELATIONS WITH TWO
SUCH IMPORTANT ALLIES AS FRANCE AND THE UK. HOWEVER, I
STRESSED ANEW, THE GOF MUST UNDERSTAND, AND HOPEFULLY
FRENCH PUBLIC OPINION COULD BE BROUGHT TO UNDERSTAND,
THAT THERE WAS ONLY SO MUCH THE USG COULD DO TO
INFLUENCE THE DECISION OF THE PORT AUTHORITY.

9. DE GUIRINGAUD, SAYING THAT HE WAS PUTTING THE
QUESTION ONLY HALF-SERIOUSLY, ASKED WHAT THE CHANCES
WOULD BE FOR CONCORDE TO BE PERMITTED TO LAND AT NEWARK
IF IT WAS NOT AUTHORIZED TO LAND AT JFK. AFTER NOTING
THAT NEWARK AIRPORT TOO WAS UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF
THE PORT AUTHORITY, I SAID THAT PERHAPS THE NEW JERSEY
AUTHORITIES WOULD BE MORE RECEPTIVE TO CONCORDE SERVICE
BUT OF THIS I COULDN'T BE SURE. IN ANY CASE, NEWARK
HAD THE DISADVANTAGE OF OFFERING MUCH POORER CONNECTIONS
AS COMPARED TO JFK. DE GUIRINGAUD SAID THIS WAS ALSO
HIS OPINION, AND HE SAID THAT CONCORDE SERVICE BETWEEN
WASHINGTON AND PARIS WAS SUFFERING BECAUSE OF THE POOR
CONNECTIONS BETWEEN NEW YORK AND DULLES AIRPORT.

10. DE GUIRINGAUD SAID THAT HE HAD LUNCHEDED IN NEW YORK
A FEW MONTHS AGO WITH THE HEAD OF THE PORT AUTHORITY,
WHO HAD TOLD HIM AT THAT TIME THAT THE PORT AUTHORITY
WOULD FEEL MUCH MORE "AT EASE" IN HANDING DOWN ITS
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DECISION ONCE THE PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION WAS OVER.
DE GUIRINGAUD SAID HE UNDERSTOOD THE PORT AUTHORITY
COULD NOT HAVE BEEN EXPECTED TO ISSUE ITS DECISION
IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE ELECTION, BUT HE HOPED THAT THE
PORT AUTHORITY WOULD NOW ACT PROMPTLY AND THAT ITS
DECISION WOULD BE A GOOD ONE.
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